

(19)

Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets



(11)

EP 0 985 470 B1

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION

(45) Date of publication and mention
of the grant of the patent:
01.12.2004 Bulletin 2004/49

(51) Int Cl.7: **B21H 3/08, B23P 15/00,**
F16H 25/22

(21) Application number: **99117481.4**(22) Date of filing: **10.09.1999**

(54) **Ball screwed nut, linear guiding apparatus and ball screw for steering using the same and method of manufacturing the ball screwed nut**

Kugelgewindemutter, Vorrichtung zur Linearführung und Kugelgewindespindel für Lenksystem, die diese benutzen, und Herstellungsverfahren für die Kugelgewindemutter

Ecrou à billes , dispositif de guidage linéaire et vis à billes pour système de direction utilisants celui-ci et procédé de fabrication pour l' écrou à billes

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE GB IT

(30) Priority: **11.09.1998 JP 25861198**

(43) Date of publication of application:
15.03.2000 Bulletin 2000/11

(73) Proprietor: **THK CO., LTD.**
Tokyo 141 (JP)

(72) Inventors:

- Sonoda, Katsuhiro
Higashine-shi, Yamagata (JP)
- Shirai, Takeki
Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo (JP)
- Yamanaka, Shigeru
Naniwa-ku, Osaka-shi, Osaka (JP)

(74) Representative: **HOFFMANN - EITLE**
Patent- und Rechtsanwälte
Arabellastrasse 4
81925 München (DE)

(56) References cited:
EP-A- 0 665 392 WO-A-98/27366
US-A- 4 255 980 US-A- 4 953 418

- PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1996, no. 02, 29 February 1996 (1996-02-29) -& JP 07 251230 A (HONDA MOTOR CO LTD), 3 October 1995 (1995-10-03)
- PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 1997, no. 11, 28 November 1997 (1997-11-28) -& JP 09 192772 A (NTN CORP), 29 July 1997 (1997-07-29)

Note: Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid. (Art. 99(1) European Patent Convention).

Description**1. Field of the Invention**

5 [0001] The present invention relates to a ball screwed nut according to the preamble of claim 1, a linear guiding apparatus and, a ball screw for steering using the ball screwed nut of claims 1 or 2, and a method of manufacturing the ball screwed nut.

[0002] A ball screwed nut according to the preamble of claim 1 is disclosed in WO-98/27366.

10 [0003] Document EP-665392 discloses a method of manufacturing a ball screwed nut having a spiral ball rolling groove in which balls roll, the method comprising the steps of providing a metallic sleeve blank and forming the groove by rough tapping and finish tapping.

2. Description of the Related Art

15 [0004] Conventionally, a ball screwed nut was defined in an internal groove with a ball rolling groove by cutting and grinding. As a method of defining the ball rolling groove in the ball screwed nut, the following method has been known. At first, a prepared hole is opened in a blank material by a drill. Next, a spiral ball rolling groove is cut in the peripheral surface of the prepared hole by a bite. Finally, the ball rolling groove thus cut is ground units surface with a grinding stone.

20 [0005] However, in the conventional ball screwed nut defined with the ball rolling groove by the cutting and grinding processes, there is a case where when grinding a ball screwed nut small in inner diameter, a grinding stone cannot be inserted into a prepared hole, thereby making the grinding process impossible. Otherwise, similarly to the ball screwed nut having the small inner diameter, even in a ball screwed nut having a large lead, there is a case in which since an inserting amount of the grinding stone into the prepared hole is limited because a lead angle is large, the grinding process cannot be performed.

25 [0006] Besides, in the grinding process, concave and convex in cross section of a ball rolling groove to be machined are sharpened. As a result, when the balls roll on the processed part, a convex is leveled and worn, the generation of worn powders and the reduction of pre-load by an amount of wearing the convex is induced. Since the grinding stone is fixed at a front end of a shaft supported by a cantilever, the grinding stone may be subjected to chattering vibration during grinding operation or probably escaped off from a ground face by bending the shaft of the grinding stone. Consequently, there was a fear that the roughness of surface is more furthered in the conventional art.

30 [0007] Besides, in the grinding process of the ball rolling groove, the grinding stone is liable to be worn because of the small diameter of the grinding stone to lower the precision of R shape of the ball rolling groove. As a result, the R precision of the ball rolling groove is liable to be varied, resulting in a variation of the diameter, irregularity in sizing or lowering of degree in roundness.

35 [0008] WO 98/27366 discloses a device for converting a rotational movement into a rectilinear movement, including a ball screwed nut. In this context, the ball rolling grooves of the nut are manufactured into sheet material by a rolling process. Since the sheet material is of less hardness compared to the material used in ball screwed nuts as described above, a rolling process can easily be used.

40 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

45 [0009] Accordingly, an object of the invention which has been made in view of the above is to provide a ball screwed nut which can be formed with a ball screw having a ball rolling groove small in diameter or large in lead having a sufficient hardness to roll the balls, and which is small in surface roughness of the ball rolling groove and high in precision of R shape of the ball rolling groove, and a method of manufacturing the ball screwed nut.

[0010] The above object is solved by the features of claims 1 and 5, respectively. Further embodiments may be taken from the dependent claims.

50 [0011] Accordingly there is provided a ball screwed nut which is defined in an inner peripheral surface thereof with a ball rolling groove in which balls roll, in which the ball rolling groove is formed by a rolling process.

[0012] According to this invention, since the ball rolling is subjected to a rolling process, the ball rolling groove can be formed without the grinding process. Therefore, a ball screwed nut even having a small diameter or a large lead can be produced. Further, by a plastic working employing the rolling process, the surface of the ball rolling groove is processed in a sharp and flat face without creating concave and convex thereon, and is therefore mirror-finished with less roughness. Thus, wearing of the surface of the ball rolling groove caused by rolling the balls is reduced, and the pre-load is maintained, with the result that the durability of the ball screw can be enhanced. In addition, since the ball rolling groove is formed by the rolling process not by the grinding stone which is easily worn but by the rolling tap excellent in the durability, the precision of R shape in the surface of the ball rolling groove can be made excellent.

[0013] According to the invention, the ball screwed nut is made of a stainless steel corresponding to SUS-27 of Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS), and hardness of the surface of the ball rolling groove which has been subjected to work hardening by the rolling process is 40 or more in C scale of Rockwell hardness.

5 [0014] According to the invention, since metal structure of the ball rolling groove is continued in fibrous texture, the surface of the ball rolling groove is work-hardened to enhance hardness. Since the ball screwed nut is made of a stainless steel corresponding to SUS-27 of Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS), and the hardness of the surface of the ball rolling groove which has been subjected to work hardening is set to 40 or more in C scale of Rockwell hardness, the ball rolling groove having the hardness sufficient to roll the balls can be available.

10 [0015] According to a further embodiment of the invention, there is provided the ball screwed nut defined in the first aspect of the invention, in which the ball rolling groove is finished on the surface thereof by a burnishing process.

[0016] According to the invention, concave and convex on the surface of the ball rolling groove are evened by the burnishing process into a more smoothened surface.

15 [0017] According to an embodiment of the invention, there is provided a linear guiding apparatus comprising: a ball screwed shaft having a first spiral ball rolling groove in an outer peripheral surface and, a slider supported movably in a longitudinal direction of guide rails and including an endless circuit with a second spiral ball rolling groove, corresponding to the first spiral ball rolling groove, and a plurality of balls arranged in line in the endless circuit so as to roll therein in association with movement of the slider, the slider being reciprocated while the ball screwed shaft rotates, wherein the second ball rolling groove of the slider is formed by the rolling process.

20 [0018] According to the invention, in addition to the actions and effects obtained by the first aspect of the invention, even if the slider extends along the longitudinal direction of the guide rail, the ball rolling groove can be formed in the center of the slider. Therefore, a force of reciprocating the slider can be exerted on the center of the slider so as to check twisting of the slider, so that the reciprocation of the slider is well balanced.

25 [0019] According to a further embodiment of the invention, there is provided the ball screw for steering, comprising: a ball screwed shaft having a first spiral ball rolling groove in an external peripheral surface thereof and connected to a steering wheel; a ball screwed nut having an endless circuit with a second spiral ball rolling groove corresponding to the first ball rolling groove and a steering gear on an external periphery thereof, and a plurality of balls arranged in the endless circuit of the ball screwed nut to roll while receiving a load between the first and second ball rolling grooves, wherein the second ball rolling groove of the ball screwed nut is formed by a rolling process.

30 [0020] According to the invention, as described above, since the second ball rolling groove of the ball screwed nut is formed by the rolling process, the surface of the second ball rolling groove is processed in a sharp and flat surface without creating concave and convex thereon, and is mirror-finished with less roughness. Thus, wearing of the surface of the second ball rolling groove caused by rolling the balls is reduced, and a pre-load is maintained, so that the durability of the ball screw can be improved. In addition, the ball rolling groove is formed by the rolling process not by a grinding stone which is readily worn but by a plastic working tool such as a rolling tap excellent in the durability, so that the precision of R shape in the surface of the ball rolling groove can be made excellent.

35 [0021] According to another embodiment of the invention, there is provided a method of manufacturing a ball screwed nut defined with a spiral ball rolling groove in which balls roll, said method comprising the steps of forming a prepared hole in a blank material, cutting a spiral groove in the inner peripheral surface of the prepared hole, wherein the spiral groove to be formed by the cutting process is almost V-shaped in cross section, and rolling the ball rolling groove by relatively rotating the blank material and a rolling tap while inserting the rolling tap into the prepared hole. A rolling tap may be used to the plastic working tool.

40 [0022] According to the invention, since there is provided the step of rolling the ball rolling groove in the ball screwed nut, one process of the rolling process is sufficient, although the conventional method requires two processes consisting of the cutting and grinding processes, whereby the processing cost for the ball rolling groove can be lowered, and a lead time can be shortened as the processing steps are saved.

The rolling step includes the sub-step of screwing the plastic working tool in the spiral groove.

[0023] According to the invention, since there is provided the step of cutting the spiral groove in the prepared hole, a processing resistance of the plastic working tool is reduced in the rolling process, and the ball screwed nut having the ball rolling groove large in diameter processing resistance can be formed by the rolling process.

50 [0024] According to the invention, since the groove of substantially V-shaped in cross section is cut in the cutting process, when it is plastic-worked by the plastic working tool, a flow of the blank material caused by pressure of the plastic working tool is diverged into two directions, that is, in a direction of a bottom having the R shape in cross section and outwardly thereof at a first contacting point between the plastic working tool and the V shaped groove as the flow dividing point. Therefore, compared with a case in which a flat prepared hole not formed with the V shaped groove is plastic-worked and the blank material is caused to flow from the R-shaped bottom outwardly, a flowing distance of the blank material can be shortened, so that a microscopic spring back caused by the plastic deformation of the ball rolling groove can be decreased and the precision of the ball rolling groove can be enhanced.

[0025] According to a further embodiment of the invention, there is provided the method as defined above, wherein

the surface of the ball rolling groove is finished by the burnishing process.

[0026] According to the invention, since the plastic working tool having a smooth surface is pressed to the surface of the ball rolling groove, the surface of the ball rolling groove comes to a more smoothened mirror face by the burnishing work.

5

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0027]

- 10 Fig. 1 is a cross sectional view showing a ball screwed nut according to an embodiment of the invention;
- Fig. 2 is an enlarged view showing a part A of Fig. 1;
- Figs. 3A and 3B are enlarged views showing ball rolling grooves, in which Fig. 3A shows a product by a rolling process whereas Fig. 3B shows a product by a grinding process;
- Figs. 4A and 4B are graphs showing roughness in ball rolling grooves, in which Fig. 4A shows a product by a rolling process, and Fig. 4B shows a product by a grinding process;
- 15 Fig. 5 is a plan view showing the linearly guiding apparatus according to another embodiment of the invention;
- Fig. 6 is a cross sectional view of the slider of the linearly guiding apparatus;
- Fig. 7 is a cross sectional view showing a ball screwed nut for steering according to another embodiment of the invention;
- 20 Figs. 8A to 8F are views showing steps of a method of manufacturing a ball screwed nut according to another embodiment of the invention;
- Figs. 9A and 9B are perspective views showing spiral V shaped grooves formed in a prepared hole;
- Figs. 10A and 10B are schematic views showing the flows of a blank material which is subjected to a rolling process, in which Fig. 10A shows the rolling of the flat face whereas Fig. 10B shows the rolling of the V shaped groove;
- 25 Fig. 11 is a cross sectional view for explaining the flowing of the blank material in the ball rolling groove;
- Fig. 12 is a plan view showing the rolling tap; and
- Fig. 13 is an enlarged view showing a part B of Fig. 12.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

30

[0028] Now, a description will be given in more detail of preferred embodiments of the invention with reference to the accompanying drawings.

[0029] Fig. 1 shows a ball screwed nut 1 according to a first embodiment of the invention. The ball screwed nut 1 is almost cylindrical and has a flange 1a to be connected to a carrying machine or the like at one end thereof. A ball rolling groove 1c along which balls roll is defined in an inner peripheral surface of the ball screwed nut 1, and a flattened part 1b is defined on the outer peripheral surface thereof. The flattened part 1b is connected with a member such as a return pipe formed with a no-load return passage for connecting one end to the other end of the ball rolling groove 1c. In an endless circuit made up of the ball rolling groove 1c and the no-load return passage, balls are received in line. The ball rolls along the ball rolling groove 1c while receiving a load, passes through the no-load return passage and is again returned to the ball rolling groove. The cross section of the ball rolling groove 1c may, as shown in Fig. 2, be formed by combining two circular arcs each having the radius of curvature R slightly larger than the radius of the balls 2 (Gothic arc groove), or may be formed with one circular arc slightly larger than the radius of curvature of the balls 2 (circular arc groove).

[0030] The ball rolling groove 1c formed in the inner peripheral surface of the ball screwed nut 1 is subjected to a rolling process with the result that it is no longer necessary to machine the ball rolling groove 1c with a grinding stone as conventionally. Accordingly, the ball rolling groove 1c can be formed in a ball screwed nut 8 small in diameter into which the grinding stone could not be inserted. Further, when the ball rolling groove 1c having a large lead is ground in the grinding process, an angle at which a shaft of the grinding stone is inclined should be taken large. This causes the amount of the grinding stone going into a prepared hole 4b to be limited, resulting in a case where the ball rolling groove 1c having a large lead could not be ground in the conventional art. According to the ball screwed nut 1 subjected to the rolling process, the ball rolling groove 1c having a large lead can be easily formed merely by making large the lead of a rolling tap for forming the ball rolling groove 1c.

[0031] Fig. 3A and 3B show the comparison of the cross sections of the ball rolling grooves 1c, where Fig. 3A is a product by the rolling process and Fig. 3B is a product by the grinding process. As seen in those figures, in the rolled product shown in Fig. 3A the R shape of the ball rolling groove 1c can be enhanced in precision as compared with the ground product shown in Fig. 3B. For example, in the rolled product shown in Fig. 3A, a symmetrically excellent shape is available at the edge 3 of the ball rolling groove 1c. In addition, a ball contact angle α of the rolled product shown in Fig. 3A is larger than a ball contact angle β of the ground product shown in Fig. 3B. Thus, the rolled product shown in

EP 0 985 470 B1

Fig. 3A can obtain an ideal ball contact angle. The R precision of the ball rolling surface can be made good by rolling the surface with the rolling tap little in wearing and excellent in durability, not with the grinding stone to be easily worn. Further, the ball screwed nuts obtained where diameters are less in variation, sizes are uniform and roundness is excellent.

5 [0032] Figs. 4A and 4B show the comparison of surface roughness of the ball rolling grooves 1c between the rolled product shown in Fig. 3A and the ground product shown in Fig. 3B. As seen in those figures, the rolled product shown in Fig. 3A is smaller in surface roughness than the ground product shown in Fig. 3B. The surface of the ball rolling groove 1c is finished by a burnishing process, as a result of which the roughness on the surface of the ball rolling groove 1c is processed in a sharp and flat face without causing roughness thereon, the wearing of the surface on the ball rolling groove 1c to be caused by rolling of the ball is reduced, and a pre-load is maintained. As a result, the durability of the ball screwed nut can be improved.

10 [0033] A material of the ball screwed nut is a stainless steel corresponding to Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS) SUS-27 which is an austenitic stainless steel, the chemical composition of which is shown in Table 1.

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
55

TABLE 1

Chemical composition (%)						
JIS	C	Si	Mn	P	S	Ni
SUS-27	0.08 or less	1.00 or less	2.00 or less	0.040 or less	0.030 or less	8.00 to 10.50
						18.00 to 20.00

[0034] Since the metallographic structure of the ball rolling groove 1c is continued in fibrous texture, the surface of the ball rolling groove 1c is work-hardened to increase hardness. The hardness of the ball rolling groove 1c which has been work-hardened is 40C or more in C scale of Rockwell hardness. The ball screwed nut 1 is made of a stainless steel corresponding to SUS-27 of the Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS), and since the hardness of the ball rolling groove 1c which has been work-hardened is set to 40C or more in C scale of Rockwell hardness, the ball rolling groove 1c which has the enough hardness to roll the balls 2 is obtained.

[0035] Fig. 5 shows a linearly guiding apparatus 11 according to an embodiment of the invention. This apparatus 11 includes a ball screwed nut 12 having a spiral ball rolling groove in the outer periphery, a slider 10 provided with an endless circuit containing a spiral ball rolling groove corresponding to the spiral ball rolling groove of the ball screwed nut 12, and a plurality of balls (not shown) received in line in the endless circuit so as to roll in association with actuation of the slider 10. The slider 10 is supported movably along the longitudinal direction of a guide rail 13 which is substantially U-shaped in cross section and right angled with respect to the longitudinal direction. Opposed inner surfaces 13a and 13b of the guide rail 13 are formed with ball rolling grooves for rails along the longitudinal direction. The slider 10 is also formed with an endless circuit for rails containing ball rolling grooves for rail corresponding to the ball rolling groove for rails defined in the guide rail 13. Also, in the endless circuit for rail of the slider 10, a plurality of balls are received in line so as to circulate therein in association with the movement of the slider 10. When the screw shaft 12 is rotationally driven by a motor 14, the slider 10 supported movably along the longitudinal direction of the guide rail 13 is reciprocated.

[0036] Fig. 6 shows the cross section of the slider 10. A ball rolling groove 10a is formed in the inner peripheral surface of the slider 10 by a rolling process. Since the ball rolling groove 10a is formed by the rolling process, even if a distance L from the edge of the slider 10 to a groove processed position is long, the ball rolling groove 10a can be formed. Thus, a distance where the grinding stone is inserted from the edge of the slider 10 is not limited as in the grinding process, and the ball rolling groove 10a can be formed in the center of the slider 10. As a result, a force for reciprocating the slider 10 supported by the guide rails 13 can be exerted at the center of the slider 10 so that the slider may be prevented from twisting to make good balance in reciprocation of the slider 10.

[0037] Fig. 7 shows a ball screwed nut for steering. A steering wheel (not shown) is connected with a screw shaft 21 having a spiral ball rolling groove 21a for the screw shaft in an outer peripheral surface thereof. On the other hand, a ball screwed nut 22 is formed in an inner peripheral surface thereof with an endless circuit having a spiral ball rolling groove 22a corresponding to the ball rolling groove 21a for screw. In the endless circuit, a large number of balls 23 are received in line so as to roll while receiving a load between the ball rolling grooves 21a and 22a. A steering gear 24 formed of a rack is disposed on the outer peripheral surface of the ball screwed nut 22. A steering arm 25 has a sector gear 26 in mesh with the steering gear 24. When the steering wheel rotates, the screw shaft 21 rotates and the ball screwed nut 22 moves in an axial direction of the screw shaft 21. With the movement of the ball screwed nut 22, the steering arm 25 is oscillated in association with movement of the ball screwed nut 22. With the arrangement of a large number of balls 23 in line, the balls 23 are brought in roll contact with the screw shaft 21 and the ball screwed nut 22 to reduce friction, thereby making handle steering light.

[0038] The ball rolling groove 22a is formed by the rolling process similarly to the ball screwed nut 1. Since the ball rolling groove 22a of the ball screwed nut 22 is subjected to the rolling process, the surface of the ball rolling groove 22a is made sharp, flat and mirror-finished without any roughness. Consequently, the wearing of the surface of the ball rolling groove 22a to be caused by rolling the balls 23 is reduced, the pre-load is maintained, and the durability of the ball screwed nut for steering can be improved. The R precision of the surface of the ball rolling groove 22a can be made good by rolling the ball rolling groove 22a with the rolling tap little in wearing and excellent in durability, not with the grinding stone to be easily worn.

[0039] Figs. 8A to 8F show a method of manufacturing the ball screwed nut 1 according to an embodiment of the invention. At first, as shown in Fig. 8A, an outer periphery of a cylindrical blank material 4 is cut by a bite 5 into a flange 4a (step S1). At this time, the outer diameter of the blank material 4 is cut to be slightly larger than a finished size. Next, as shown in Fig. 8B, the blank material 4 is formed with a prepared hole 4b by a drill 6 (step S2). A diameter of the prepared hole 4b is optimally selected taking the flow of the blank material 4 in the vicinity of the ball rolling groove 22a into consideration. Subsequently, as shown in Fig. 8C, the prepared hole 4b is widened up to a correct size by a boring bite 7 (step S3). Then, the surface roughness of the prepared hole 4b is finished to be 6.3S or more. Thereafter, as shown in Fig. 8D, the blank material 4 is rotated at low speed of 100 to 200rpm, and a rolling tap 8 is inserted into the prepared hole 4b so as to roll the ball rolling groove 1c in the blank material 1c (step S4). The surface of the ball rolling groove 1c is burnish-finished by the rolling process using the rolling tap 8 having a flat face. In the rolling process, a cutting oil is fully applied to prevent heating by the blank material 4. Next, as shown in Fig. 8E, a return part 4d for circulating the balls 23 is groove-processed in the blank material 4 by an end mill 9, and the outer periphery of the blank material 4 is cut by the bite 5 to finish the outer diameter (step S5). Finally, as shown in Fig. 8F, the rolling tap 8 is again allowed to pass through the ball rolling groove 4c of the blank material 4 for removing burrs of the ball rolling groove 4c (step S6).

[0040] Since the blank material 4 is formed with the ball rolling groove 4c through the rolling process (step S4), it is

no longer necessary to grind the ball rolling groove 4c with the grinding stone as in the conventional method. Consequently, a processing cost for the ball rolling groove 4c can be saved. In addition, since the number of processing steps is decreased, the lead time can be shortened.

[0041] When the blank material 4 large in inner diameter is subjected to the rolling process, the cutting process is provided for cutting a spiral groove in the inner peripheral surface of the prepared hole 4b by means of a bite or a cutting tap between the process of forming the prepared hole 4b(steps S2, S3) and the process of rolling the ball rolling groove 1c in the prepared hole 4b (step S4). That is, a spiral groove is cut in the inner peripheral surface of the prepared hole 4b, and subsequently the rolling tap is screwed into the spiral groove so as to roll the ball rolling groove 4c in the blank material 4.

[0042] As described above, with provision of the process of cutting the spiral groove in the prepared hole 4c, the processing resistance of the rolling tap 8 can be decreased in the rolling process, thereby making it possible to roll ball screwed nuts having the ball rolling grooves large in diameter.

[0043] As shown in Figs. 9A and 9B, there is a case in which grooves are formed in spiral grooves of almost V shape in cross section depending upon the cutting process. Fig. 9A shows a blank material 4 formed with only a prepared hole 4b whereas Fig. 9B shows a blank material 4 cut with V shaped spiral grooves in a prepared hole 4b. Figs. 10A and 10B show a comparison of flows of parts 4e cut in the blank material 4. Fig. 10A shows a case in which a flat face 4f formed with only a prepared hole 4b is subjected to a rolling process with the rolling tap 8. Fig. 10B shows a case in which a spiral V shaped groove 30 in cross section is subjected to the rolling process with the rolling tap 8.

[0044] As shown in Figs. 10A, 10B and 11, the blank material 4 flows outwardly by a pressure of the rolling tap 8 in left and right directions (c-directions) from a diverging point of an R shaped bottom 31 of the ball rolling groove 4c. On the contrary, in the case where the V shaped groove 30 is subjected to the rolling process, the blank material 4 is diverged into two directions, that is, a direction of the R cross sectional bottom (b-direction) and outwardly thereof (a-direction) at diverging points of the flow which are first contacts 32 between the rolling tap 8 and the V-shaped groove 30. Therefore, compared with a case of causing the blank material 4 to flow outwardly from the R cross sectional bottom 31, a flowing distance of the blank material 4 is shortened, and an amount of microscopic spring back caused by plastic deformation of the section of the ball rolling groove 1c can be decreased. As a result, the precision of the ball rolling groove 1c can be enhanced. Further, the first contacts 32 (the diverging point of flowing of the blank material) with the rolling tap 8 and the V shaped groove 30 are taken on the line of contact angle so that the flowing of the blank material 4 can be diverged from the line of contact angle as a starting point.

[0045] The rolling tap 8 includes, as seen in Figs. 12 and 13, a square part 35a to be chucked to a machine tool, a shank part 35b and a rolling edge 35c. A material of the rolling tap 8 is SUS 440. The rolling edge 35c is formed with a spiral thread and is formed at a front end thereof with taper to be ready for catching the blank material 4. A cross section of the thread is almost arc shaped as shown in Fig. 13, which corresponds to a cross section of the ball rolling groove 4c, and may be formed by combining two circular arcs having the radius of curvature R slightly larger than the radius of the balls 2 (Gothic arc groove) or may be formed with one circular arc slightly larger than the radius of curvature of the balls 2 (circular arc groove). In addition, the rolling edge 35c is provided with grooves 35d at four equal parts in a peripheral direction thereof. The rolling edge 35c is coated with Tin on the surface so as to be smoothened. when a process of cutting the groove 30 spirally or V shaped in cross section is conducted prior to the rolling process, the front end of the rolling edge 35c may be continuously formed with the cutting edge having the same lead integrally with the rolling edge 35c.

[0046] As was described above, according to the invention, since the ball rolling groove in which the balls of the ball screwed nut are rolled is formed by the rolling process, the ball screwed nuts can be formed not depending upon the cutting process. This makes it possible to form ball screwed nuts of small diameter or large lead. The surface of the ball rolling groove is processed to be sharp without any roughness by the plastic working of the rolling process and finished in a mirror face with less roughness. Further, since the ball rolling groove is formed by the rolling process not by the grinding stone which is liable to be worn but by the plastic working tool such as a rolling tap less in wear and excellent in the durability, the R precision of the surface of the ball rolling groove can be made preferable.

50 Claims

1. A ball screwed nut (1) comprising:

a nut body having a ball rolling groove (1c) defined in an inner peripheral surface thereof; and
 55 a plurality of balls (2) inserted and rolling in a portion of said ball rolling groove; wherein said ball rolling groove is formed by a rolling process, characterized in that said ball screwed nut is made of a stainless steel corresponding to SUS-27 of Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS), and hardness of the surface of said ball rolling groove which has been subjected to work hardening by the rolling process is 40 or more in C scale of Rockwell

hardness.

2. The ball screwed nut as claimed in claim 1, wherein a surface of said ball rolling groove (1c) is finished by a burnishing process.
- 5 3. A linear guiding apparatus (11) comprising:
 - a ball screwed shaft (12) having a spiral ball rolling groove in an outer peripheral surface thereof; a guide rail (13);
 - 10 a ball screwed nut (10) according to claim 1 or 2, the ball screwed nut being movably supported in a longitudinal direction of said guide rail, said ball screwed nut including an endless circuit with the ball rolling groove corresponding to the spiral ball rolling groove; and a plurality of balls arranged in line in said endless circuit so as to roll in association with movement of the ball screwed nut, the ball screwed nut being reciprocated with the rotation of said ball screwed shaft.
 - 15 4. A ball screw for steering, comprising:
 - a ball screwed shaft (21) having a spiral ball rolling groove (21a) in an external peripheral surface thereof and connected to a steering wheel;
 - 20 a ball screwed nut (22) according to claim 1 or 2 having an endless circuit with the ball rolling groove (22a) corresponding to said spiral ball rolling groove and a steering gear (24) on an outer periphery thereof; and a plurality of balls (23) arranged in said endless circuit of said ball screwed nut so as to roll therein while receiving a load between the ball rolling groove and the spiral ball rolling groove.
 - 25 5. A method of manufacturing a ball screwed nut having a spiral ball rolling groove in which balls roll, said method comprising the steps of:
 - 30 forming a prepared hole in a blank material (52); cutting a spiral groove in the inner peripheral surface of the prepared hole (45), wherein the spiral groove to be formed by the cutting process is almost V-shaped in cross section,
 - 35 and rolling said ball rolling groove by relatively rotating the blank material and a rolling tap while inserting the rolling tap into the prepared hole (54).
 - 40 6. The method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the surface of said ball rolling groove is finished by a burnishing process.

Patentansprüche

1. Spindelmutter (1), umfassend:
 - 40 einen Mutterkörper mit einer Kugelwälznut (1c), die auf einer inneren Umfangsfläche davon ausgebildet ist; und
 - 45 mehrere Kugeln (2), die in einen Abschnitt der Kugelwälznut eingeführt sind und darin rollen, wobei die Kugelwälznut durch einen Walzvorgang ausgebildet ist,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Spindelmutter aus Edelstahl entsprechend SUS-27 des Japanischen Industrie-Standards (JIS) gebildet ist und eine Härte der Oberfläche der Kugelwälznut, die durch den Walzvorgang einer Kaltverfestigung unterzogen wurde, 40 oder mehr Rockwellhärte C entspricht.
- 50 2. Spindelmutter nach Anspruch 1, bei der eine Oberfläche der Kugelwälznut (1c) durch einen Polievorgang bearbeitet ist.
- 55 3. Linearführungs vorrichtung (11), umfassend:
 - eine Kugelgewindespindel (12) mit einer spiralförmigen Kugelwälznut in einer äußeren Umfangsfläche davon;
 - eine Führungsschiene (13);

eine Spindelmutter (10) gemäß Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei die Spindelmutter in einer Längsrichtung der Führungsschiene beweglich gehalten ist und einen endlosen Kreislauf mit der Kugelwälznut entsprechend der spiralförmigen Kugelwälznut aufweist und mehrere Kugeln, die in einer Reihe in dem endlosen Kreislauf angeordnet sind, um in Verbindung mit der Bewegung der Spindelmutter zu rollen, wobei sich die Spindelmutter mit der Drehung der Gewindespindel hin und her bewegt.

5 4. Kugelgewindespindel für eine Lenkung, umfassend:

10 eine Kugelgewindespindel (21) mit einer spiralförmigen Kugelwälznut (21a) in einer äußeren Umfangsfläche davon und verbunden mit einem Lenkrad;

15 eine Spindelmutter (22) gemäß Anspruch 1 oder 2, mit einem endlosen Kreislauf, bei dem die Kugelwälznut (22a) der spiralförmigen Kugelwälznut entspricht und mit einem Lenkgetriebe (24) auf einem äußeren Umfang davon; und

15 mehreren Kugeln (23), die in dem endlosen Kreislauf der Spindelmutter angeordnet sind, um darin zu rollen, während sie eine Last zwischen der Kugelwälznut und der spiralförmigen Kugelwälznut aufnehmen.

20 5. Verfahren zum Herstellen einer Spindelmutter mit einer spiralförmigen Kugelwälznut in der Kugeln rollen, umfassend die Schritte:

Bilden eines vorbereiteten Lochs in ein Vollmaterial (52);

25 Schneiden einer spiralförmigen Nut in die innere Umfangsfläche des vorbereiteten Lochs (45), wobei die spiralförmige Nut, die durch den Schneidvorgang zu bilden ist, im Querschnitt nahezu V-förmig ist, und

Walzen der Kugelwälznut durch relatives Drehen des Vollmaterials und eines Wälzgewindebohrers, während der Wälzgewindebohrer in das vorbereitete Loch (54) eingeführt wird.

30 6. Verfahren nach Anspruch 5, bei dem die Oberfläche der Kugelwälznut durch einen Poliervorgang bearbeitet wird.

Revendications

35 1. Ecrou à billes (1) comprenant :

40 un corps d'écrou ayant une gorge de roulement à billes (1c) définie dans sa surface périphérique intérieure ; et une pluralité de billes (2) insérées et roulantes dans un une partie de ladite gorge de roulement à billes ; dans lequel ladite gorge de roulement est formée au moyen d'un procédé de roulement,

45 caractérisé en ce que l'on fabrique ledit écrou à billes en acier inoxydable correspondant à la norme SUS-27 du Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS), et la dureté de la surface de ladite gorge de roulement à billes que l'on a soumise à un travail de durcissement au moyen du procédé de roulement est de 40 ou supérieur dans l'échelle C de dureté de Rockwell.

50 2. Ecrou à billes selon la revendication 1, dans lequel une surface de ladite gorge à roulement à billes (1c) est finie au moyen d'un procédé de brunissage.

50 3. Appareil de guidage linéaire (11) comprenant :

un arbre à billes (12) ayant une gorge de roulement à billes en spirale dans sa surface périphérique extérieure ; un rail guide (13) ;

55 un écrou à billes (10) selon la revendication 1 ou 2, l'écrou à billes étant supporté de façon mobile dans une direction longitudinale dudit rail guide, ledit écrou à bille comprenant un circuit sans fin avec une gorge de roulement à billes correspondant à la gorge de roulement à billes en spirale ; et une pluralité de billes disposées en ligne dans ledit circuit sans fin de façon à rouler en association avec le mouvement de l'écrou à billes, l'écrou à billes étant en va et vient avec la rotation dudit arbre à billes.

4. Ecrou à billes pour système de direction, comprenant :

un arbre à billes (21) ayant une gorge à roulement à billes en spirale (21a) sur sa surface périphérique externe et connecté à un volant de direction ;

5 un écrou à billes (22) selon la revendication 1 ou 2 ayant un circuit sans fin avec la gorge à roulement à billes (22a) correspondant à ladite gorge à roulement à billes en spirale et un pignon de direction (24) sur sa périphérie externe ; et une pluralité de billes (23) disposées dans ledit circuit sans fin dudit écrou à billes de façon à rouler à l'intérieur tout en recevant une charge entre la gorge à roulement à billes et la gorge à roulement à billes en spirale.

10

5. Procédé de fabrication d'un écrou à billes ayant une gorge à roulement à billes en spirale dans laquelle les billes roulent, ledit procédé comprenant les étapes de :

formation d'un trou préparé dans une ébauche (52) ;

15 coupage d'une gorge en spirale dans la surface de périphérie intérieure du trou préparé (45), dans lequel la gorge en spirale que l'on forme au moyen du procédé de coupage a presque une coupe en forme de V, et de roulage de ladite gorge à roulement à billes en tournant l'ébauche de façon relative et un taraud roulant tout en insérant le taraud roulant dans le trou préparé (54).

20 6. Procédé selon la revendication 5, dans lequel la surface de ladite gorge à roulement à bille est finie au moyen d'un procédé de brunissage.

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

FIG. 1

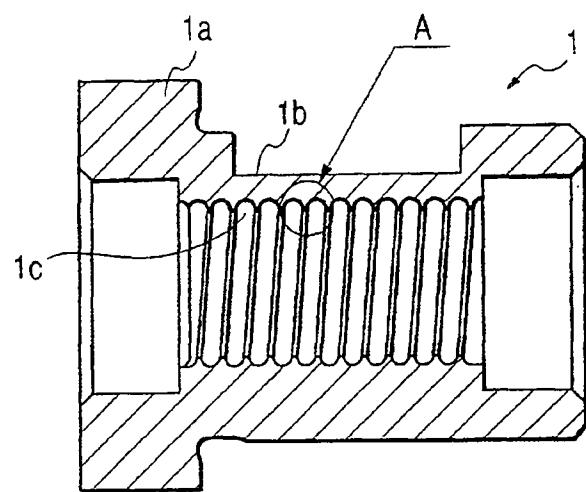


FIG. 2

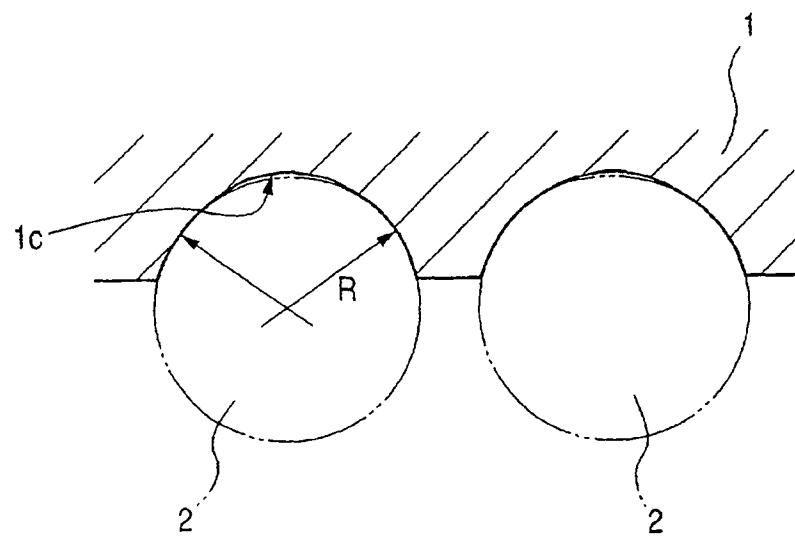


FIG. 3A

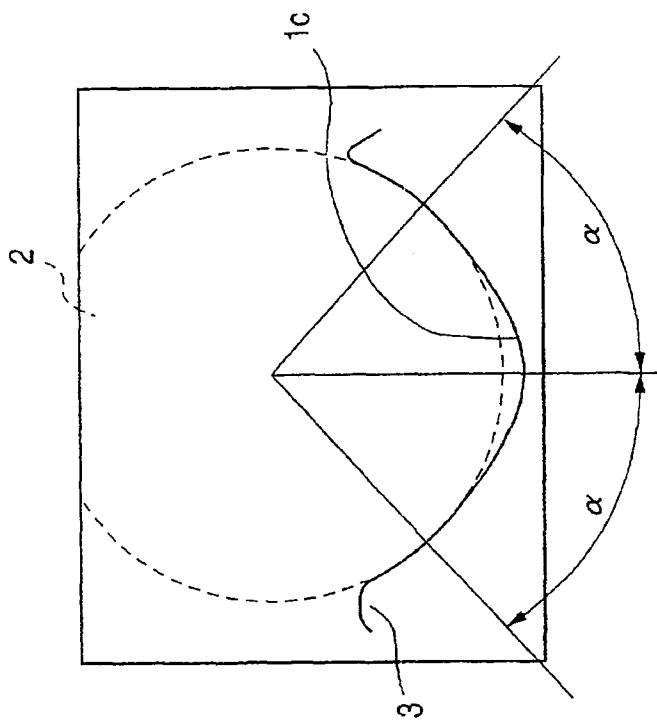


FIG. 3B

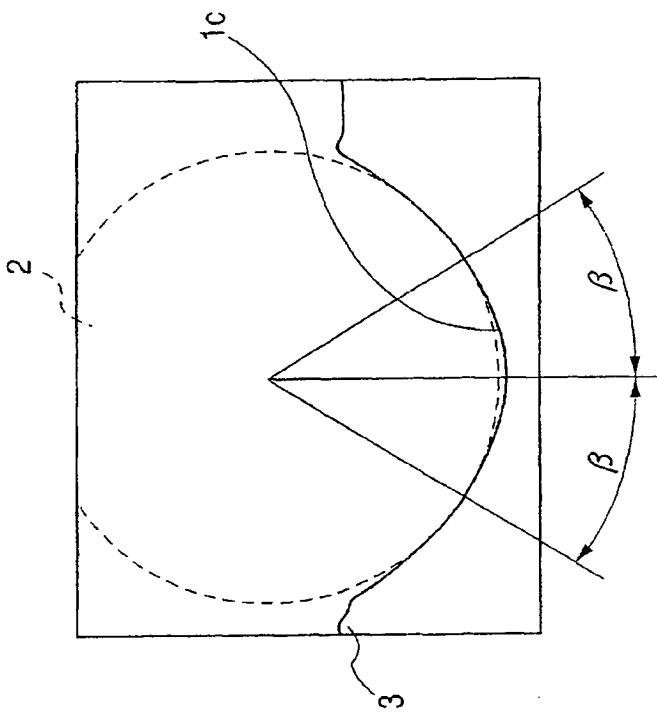


FIG. 4A

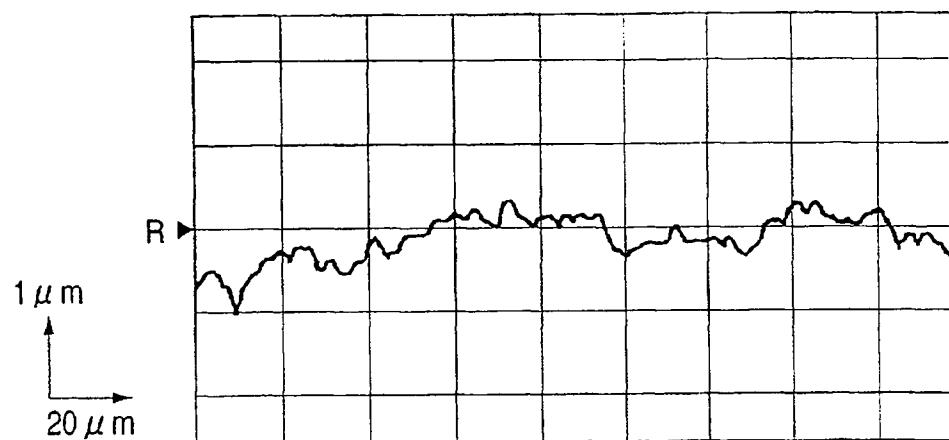


FIG. 4B

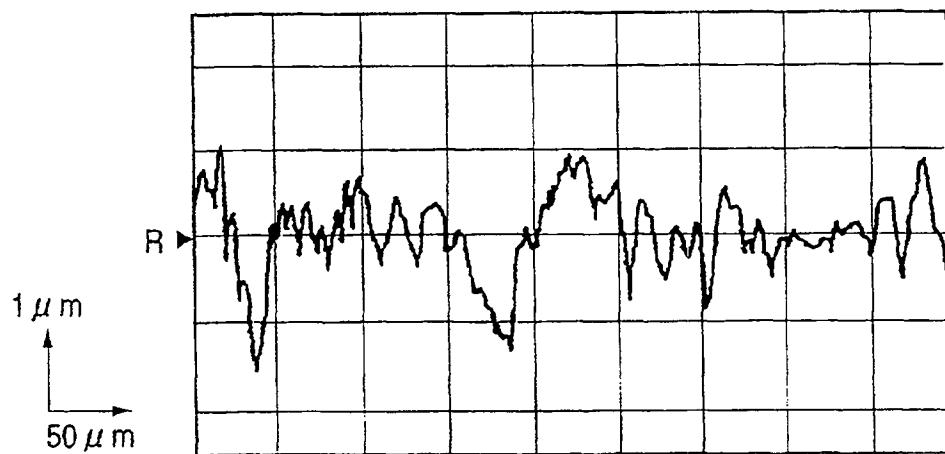


FIG. 5

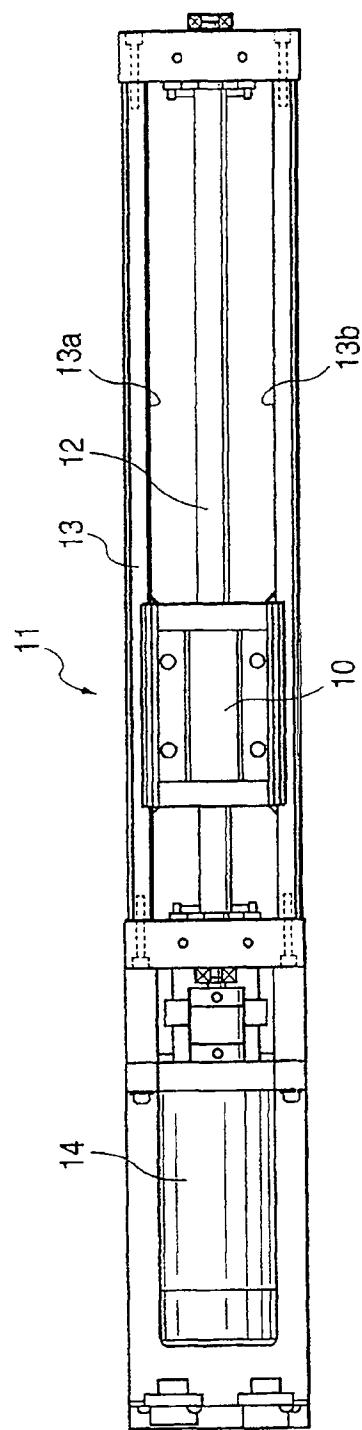


FIG. 6

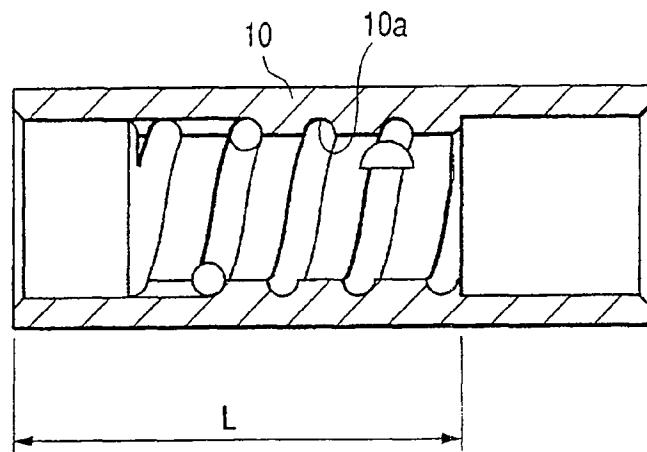


FIG. 7

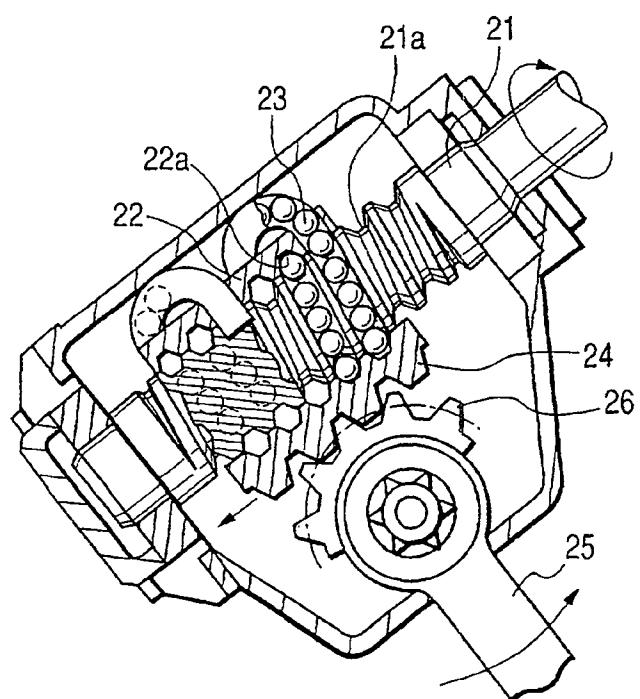


FIG. 8A

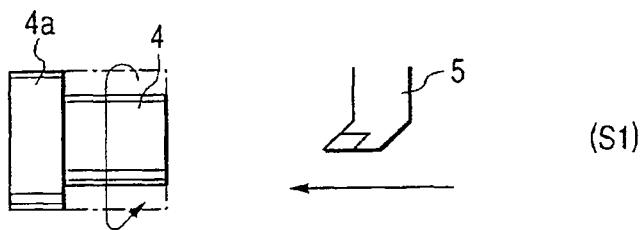


FIG. 8B

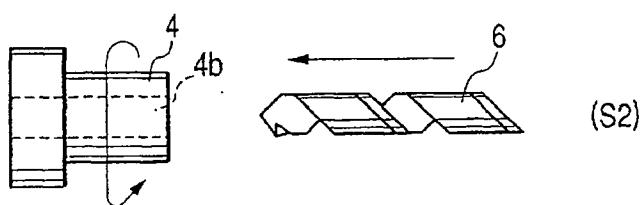


FIG. 8C

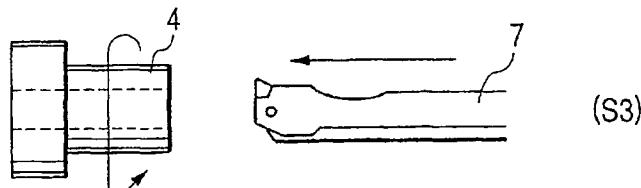


FIG. 8D

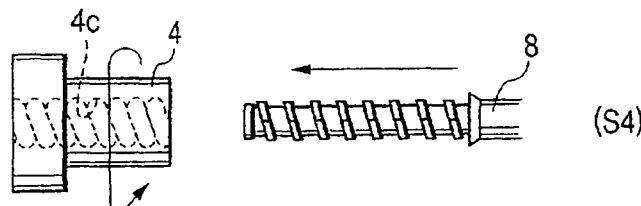


FIG. 8E

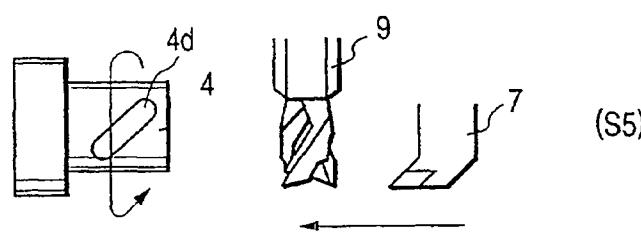


FIG. 8F

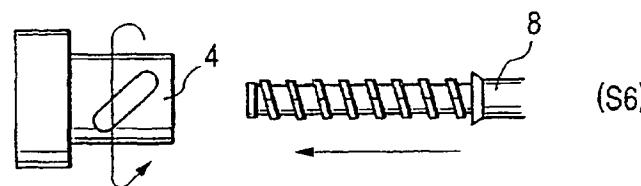


FIG. 9A

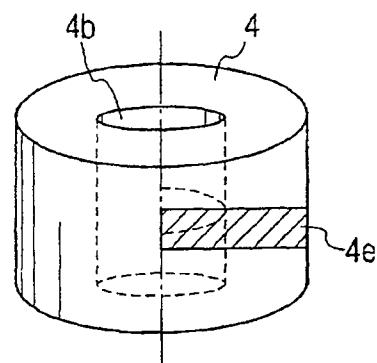


FIG. 9B

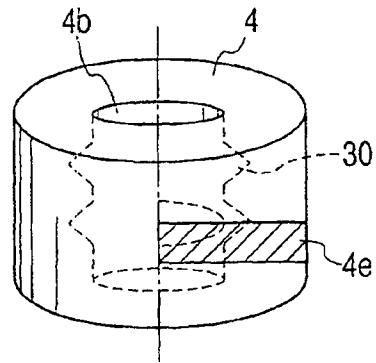


FIG. 10A

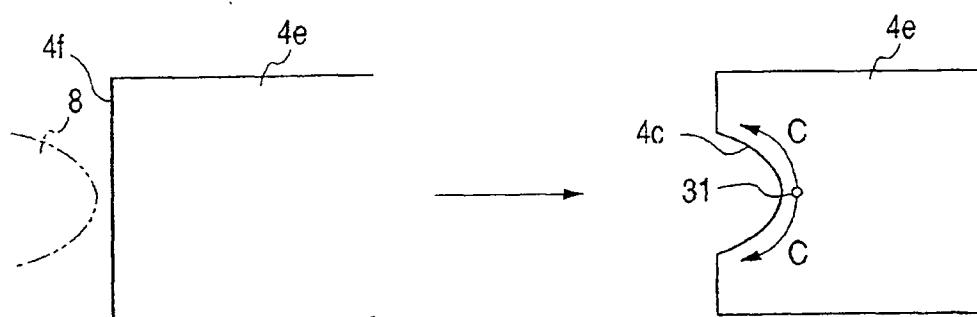


FIG. 10B

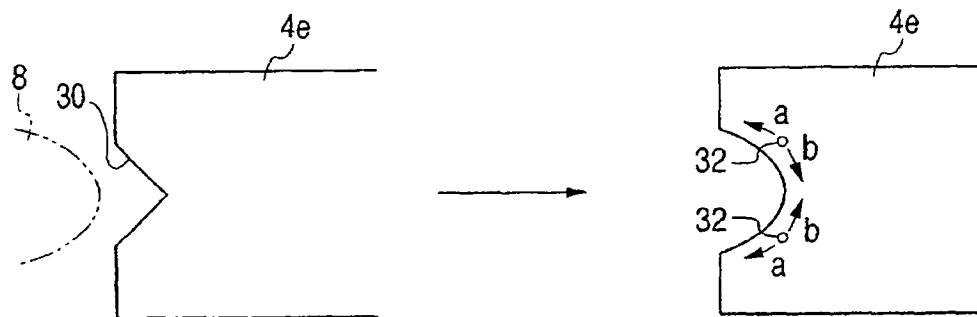


FIG. 11

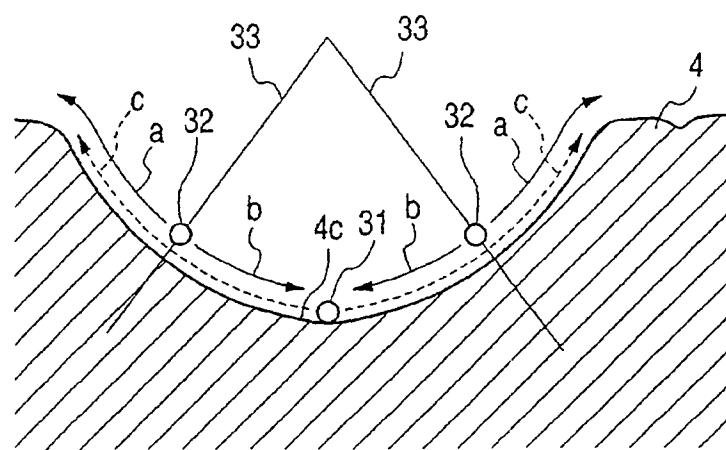


FIG. 12

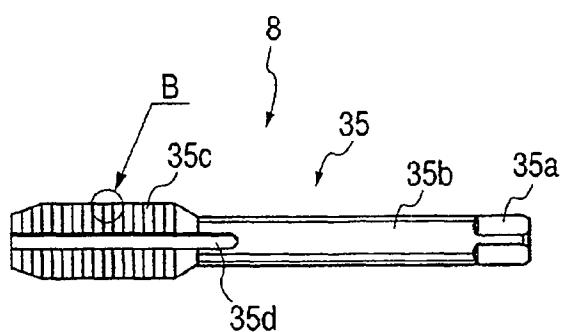


FIG. 13

